



Building Foundations for Success: Responsible Decision-Making

Whole Child Skill Development

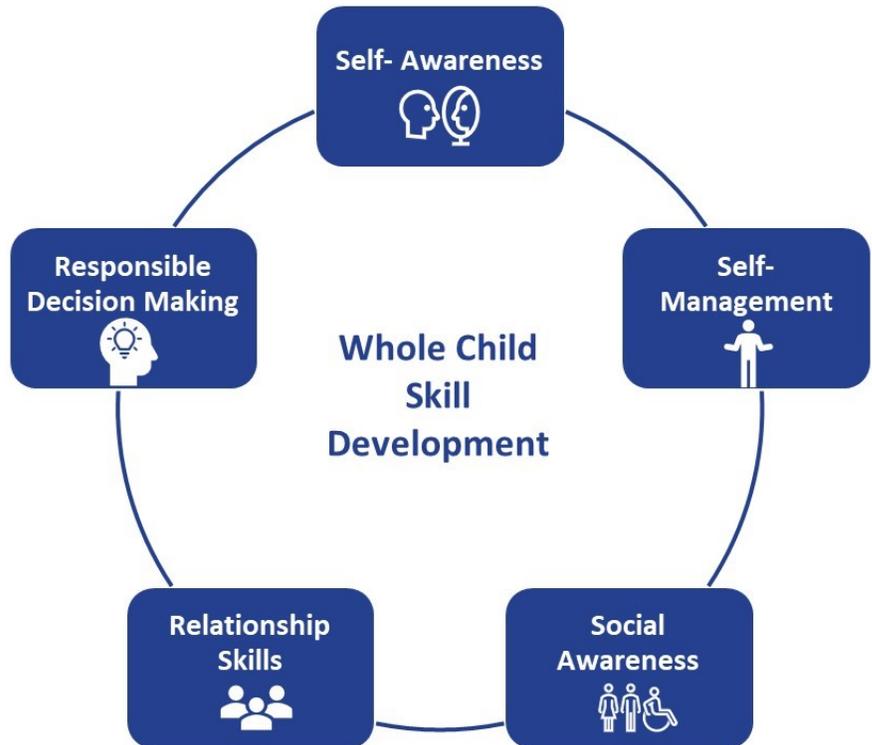
Responsible Decision-Making:

The ability to analyze a situation and make responsible decisions are essential to academic achievement and occupational success. Responsible decision-making includes the ability to use knowledge and facts to effectively solve problems.

Responsible decision-making skills are foundational to a person's ability to overcome challenges and plan for the future.

Responsible decision-making skills include the ability to:

- Identify and analyze problems
- Resolve problems and challenges
- Make ethical and responsible choices and actions



Benefits of building responsible decision-making skills:

- Students and adults with responsible decision-making skills are able to make choices that keep themselves and others safe, both physically and emotionally.
- Students and adults with responsible decision-making skills are able to gather and understand facts and data and use knowledge to make informed decisions. These skills are essential to academic achievement and occupational success.¹
- Responsible decision-making skills helps students and adults manage time and resources properly resulting in completed, on-time work, and more financial stability throughout the life course.²
- The ability to make decisions that benefit oneself and others to achieve personal and collective goals are essential for effective leadership in the workplace.³

Whole Child Skill Development : Developing whole child skills, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and the ability to make responsible decisions, are essential to student success inside and outside of the classroom. For more information, check out the OPI's [Whole Child Supports](#) website and the [Montana Whole Child Skill Development Competencies](#).

Classroom Strategies for Building Student Responsible Decision-making Skills:

Educators are very likely already implementing strategies that build responsible decision-making skills in students. The strategies below are provided for consideration and were selected by a work-group of Montana educators and child development experts as strategies that are strength-based and correspond with the [Montana Whole Child Skill Development Competencies](#). We encourage all strategies to be selected based on ease of implementation into existing curriculum, school practices, and educator and student preference.

Grade K-2:

- Read a book where the characters must make a decision. Mid-way through the book, discuss what decision the students think the character should make and why. At the conclusion of the book, discuss how the decision of the character in the book affected the character and any others in the story.
- Give students simple choices and have them provide paths for potential choices.

Grade 3-5:

- Have students journal about times they made a good decision. Ask them to reflect on what happened, why was it a good decision, how they felt after carrying out the decision, and how their decision made others feel.
- Teach students to use “[when-then](#)” and “either-or” statements to determine consequences of their actions in a variety of settings.

Grade 6-8:

- Discuss the steps of the [decision-making process](#) with students and allow students to role play, read social stories, or watch examples of characters making decisions. Allow students to reflect on each step of the [decision-making process](#) and why it is important. Ask students to apply this process to a real-life decision they may need to make.
- Have students review different social media posts and list how each post could impact the person making the post and other people.

Grade 9-12:

- Ask students to create a list of values they think are important and describe how their culture, family, peers, and community impacted their list. Have the students explain how these identified values play a part in their decision-making process.
- Students collect and/or review [school climate data](#) and present results and possible interventions to administration, school board, site council, and/or student body.

School-wide Strategies for Building Responsible Decision-making Skills:

- Construct and model [school-wide expectations and routines](#) that both students and school staff follow.
- Display visuals of the [decision-making process](#) around the school and refer to it when students have a problem to solve or decision to make. Refer to the visual during staff meetings as needed to remind adults of the process.

Strategies for Building Responsible Decision-making Skills in School Staff:

- Facilitate staff to set short and long-term goals, use self-reflection to monitor progress, and revise strategies to lead to positive change.

Check out the [Montana Standards Association Framework](#) to learn more about Whole Child Skill Development Competencies and their alignment with other Montana academic standards.